

BOOK REVIEW

PARK, Iris M. *A Study of Two Special New Zealand Collections, the Fildes Collection and the Sir Robert Stout Collection of New Zealand Pamphlets at the Victoria University of Wellington*. Wellington, Library School, National Library Service, 1961. (Studies in library administration No. 3) 36p. Photo-printed.

In October 1937 Horace Edward Manners Fildes, formerly Assistant Postmaster at Wellington, died, bequeathing his library of books, pamphlets, maps, and manuscripts relating to New Zealand, Australia and the South Seas, and his New Zealand newspapers, bound and unbound, to the Victoria University College, Wellington. Fildes had been an assiduous bibliophile and the Victoria University College must have been indeed pleased to receive this invaluable collection of over 1,800 volumes, many of them rare works. The books, including several manuscripts and a small number of pamphlets, present no great administrative problem, except perhaps the limitation of their use in the interest of preservation, to more advanced students. The inclusion of references to their contents in a reference index must be of great help to the library staff. Miss Park outlines the cataloguing of the books, gives the results of a comparison with titles listed in Hocken's *Bibliography* and in Keith Sinclair's *The Origins of the Maori Wars*, and in an Appendix lists 44 of the more important titles. A list of New Zealand newspapers, of which broken sets are held, is given.

The major part of Miss Park's 36-page study, however, is devoted to the treatment of the more difficult part of the collection—the newspaper clippings, maps and Fildes personal material. Fildes was an amateur historian with a particular interest in early New Zealand history and shipping, a methodical collector and compiler of indexes, and among all this material there is certainly much of interest. Nevertheless there are problems, connected with the physical preservation of the various items and with arranging and cataloguing and indexing them in such a way that they can be readily used by research students, which will be only too familiar to the librarian who has been given charge of any sizable collection of personal papers. It is in the clear account of the way in which the material has been handled and in the recommendations as to its further treatment that the principal value of Miss Park's report lies, although it would also be useful to anyone attempting to find his way round the collection.

Newspaper clippings form a large part of the collection. Catalogued with the books are 23 volumes of clippings, bound, pasted-up and fully indexed, from a range of New Zealand newspapers of the 1920s and 1930s. In addition there are 13 groups of pasted-up clippings and

four parcels of unmounted clippings. While series of articles on contemporary figures such as Ratana and Rua are likely to be useful it may be questioned whether articles on such topics as "Taranaki fifty years ago" would be sufficiently well documented to be of great use.

The correspondence of Horace Fildes, occupying about 30 manuscript boxes, consists mainly of inwards letters from other amateur and professional historians and descendants of early settlers. While such letters have not the interest of someone actively participating in affairs of the day and are unlikely to prove a primary source of future histories still, as Miss Park comments, "Anyone undertaking research in one of the fields touched on by Mr Fildes would probably be unwise to ignore the possibility that discussions on many fine points of early history will be found there". Miss Park has a number of sensible suggestions to make concerning the grouping, storing and calendaring of the letters and the sorting of other material in the collection into more accessible groups, and she has grouped her suggestions according to the amount of work involved in accomplishing them. They are suggestions which would be of use to any librarian dealing with a similar collection, and limited trained staff. One suspects, however, that no matter how thoroughly this type of material is dealt with, from the librarian's point of view, the average student, even at post-graduate level, may still be unaware of it, and of such aids as the Reference Catalogue unless they are brought to his notice by an active reference librarian.

In addition to the study of the Fildes collection there is a four-page outline of Sir Robert Stout's collection of New Zealand pamphlets, also held in the Victoria University of Wellington. Sir Robert's political and social interests were many and in most of these fields he played an active part. Pamphlets, over most of the period covered by the collection (roughly 1864-1925) were one of the principal means through which views were publicly expressed and because of the wide range of topics covered this collection should give an excellent picture of the social and political scene as well as providing details on particular subjects, probably difficult to find elsewhere. Miss Park notes that a subject index to the collection exists and lists 22 of the best represented subject headings. Although not presenting the problems of putting in order of the Fildes Collection, the Stout collection is probably equally valuable.

Finally, one notes that the report on these two collections was undertaken as part of a course in administration at the Library School. It appears to be a most competent appraisal and studies of similar collections should certainly be encouraged both for the training they give the writers and the information they give to librarians and research students.

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